



This is a repository copy of *Seen and unseen: using video data in ethnographic fieldwork*.

White Rose Research Online URL for this paper:  
<http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/90731/>

Version: Accepted Version

---

**Article:**

Hackett, A., Pool, S., Rowsell, J. et al. (1 more author) (2015) Seen and unseen: using video data in ethnographic fieldwork. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 15 (4). pp. 430-444. ISSN 1443-9883

<https://doi.org/10.1108/QRJ-06-2015-0037>

---

**Reuse**

Unless indicated otherwise, fulltext items are protected by copyright with all rights reserved. The copyright exception in section 29 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 allows the making of a single copy solely for the purpose of non-commercial research or private study within the limits of fair dealing. The publisher or other rights-holder may allow further reproduction and re-use of this version - refer to the White Rose Research Online record for this item. Where records identify the publisher as the copyright holder, users can verify any specific terms of use on the publisher's website.

**Takedown**

If you consider content in White Rose Research Online to be in breach of UK law, please notify us by emailing [eprints@whiterose.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@whiterose.ac.uk) including the URL of the record and the reason for the withdrawal request.



[eprints@whiterose.ac.uk](mailto:eprints@whiterose.ac.uk)  
<https://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/>

## **Seen and unseen: using video data in ethnographic fieldwork**

Abigail Hackett, Steve Pool, Jennifer Rowsell and Barsin Aghajan

### **Introduction**

*R<sup>1</sup>: What did you like about the research? P: I loved the Fourgrounds guys.*

*R: Why?*

*P: Because they were cool, they saw us, um, they saw what we could do.*

May 2014, Ivan

In this article, we share our experiences, as researchers and artists, of encountering different approaches to video making during an international research project. We draw on video making processes from a two-year international research study called *Community Arts Zone* (CAZ for short), which took place across four different contexts – with a common goal of bringing the arts into communities for the purpose of forging community. We focus in particular on the strands of research carried out in Rotherham UK, and Niagara, Canada. The former relied heavily on video footage of parents interacting with young children in community spaces and the latter focused on filming for the purposes of a documentary produced by a media production company, Fourgrounds Media, as an output of the research. In this article, we contrast these differing approaches to the role of video as a research dimension to ethnographic fieldwork and reflect on the broader implications for incorporating video and film into qualitative research.

The use of still photography in ethnographic research dates back to the work of Malinowski and his friend and photographer Witkiewicz who accompanied him on the trip to the Trobriand Islands. Schnieder and Wright (2013) highlight the contrast between

---

<sup>1</sup> R and P here refer to researcher and participant.

the two men's perspectives: Witkiewicz's concern to "capture the metaphysical face behind the surface appearance" is seen as the polar opposite of Malinowski's concern with "science" (p. 6). In recent years, the advent of digital technology and advances in the size and accessibility of recording devices have transformed the possibilities of video and the visual, more broadly, in research (Flewitt, 2006; Rose, 2013). Clearly, the relationship between research and the visual is different from the times of Malinowski, yet, the nuances of what those relationships are, how the visual is framed and assumptions that underlie the visual from the point of view of researchers and artists are things we want to explore in this paper.

In the first part of this paper, we describe some of the existing perspectives on video across the fragmented field of visual research methods and arts practice, drawing on both literature and our own experiences. During CAZ, researchers, a visual artist and filmmakers all used video within their work, each bringing different perspectives and assumptions about video with them to the project. We unpick some of these assumptions and share some thoughts and insights on practices, which might otherwise remain implicit. In the second part of the paper, we present some contrasting vignettes about the experiences of young people, children and families who were filmed as part of the project. We consider how being filmed was a meaningful experience for the participants at the different research sites, particularly in the light of the ubiquity of photography and video making devices in everyday life. Throughout our discussion, we find it useful to describe our working together as "encounters" and situate ourselves in the field working together towards a collective understanding.

## **Research background**

Funded by the Canadian government through a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Insight Development Grant, the *Community Arts Zone* (CAZ) research project profiled in this article involved eight different inquiries that were situated across four international sites. What the disparate locales shared was a commitment to community regeneration, social inclusion,

and a desire to broaden notions of literacy and communication. There were two common threads to all eight projects involved in CAZ: 1) The need to combine the arts with literacy in some way; 2) The need to connect with community.

Filming across contexts from schools to museum spaces, it became clear that the act of visualizing children and young people told the story of individuals as much as it did communities. By this we mean, video making made visible aspects of individual and community interactions, including how specific individuals acted and engaged; how groups worked together and, the role of community as a creative and generative force. For example, a teenager involved in a photography project in Niagara described how filming his community made him see his city in a different light. The camera visualized self and community in ways that he had not experienced previously, the camera has been described as the third person in the room or the silent observer. Some of the questions that arose from this perspective were: What do young people know? What mechanisms and thinking processes do they use to respond? What do different modes of representation and expression offer individuals that more traditional modes (e.g., words) do not? These questions cut across all of the projects: Boulder, Colorado had a technology-mediated after-school club in a Latino neighbourhood of the city; Niagara had five projects separated by modes: music, photography, play-making, drama, and movement; Rochester involved designing and painting a mural on the side of a marginalized community's corner store; and, Rotherham had a visual artist construct installations in public spaces and a researcher document small children's movement through them, but for the purposes of this article we will focus on the project in Rotherham, UK and the projects in Niagara, ON.

In Rotherham, researcher, artist and parents from the community videoed their children playing and making dens with an artist. In Niagara, a professional film crew videoed young people engaged in arts practice in school settings. Whilst the different CAZ projects (Boulder, Niagara, Rochester, and Rotherham<sup>2</sup>) had as their research methods a combined ethnographic-multimodal approach to data collection (Pahl and Rowsell, 2006; Rowsell and Pahl, 2015), the use of video-data differed in the CAZ Niagara study compared

---

<sup>2</sup> The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Insight Development grant funded four different research projects that took place across international sites in Boulder, USA; Niagara, Canada; Rochester, USA; and in Rotherham, UK.

with the CAZ Rotherham project. In CAZ Rotherham, Abi and Steve used film to document children's movements through spaces, but also "to capture the feel for a moment or to capture a narrative" (Pool, 2015, video on "The Uses of Film in CAZ"). Steve's filmmaking was ethnographic in its intent to represent and communicate how young children moved through spaces and how parents themselves filmed their child's mobility. In CAZ Niagara, Barsin took footage and made cuts based on a basic understanding of the research and his own aesthetic preferences and film training. The documentary produced by Barsin in consultation with Jennifer focused on telling the story of the research in a visually appealing way accompanied with allusive, mood-inducing music to guide the viewer into a desired way of interpreting the project.

In this article, we tease out the meaning of video and film in this international, ethnographic project, particularly in the light of collaboration and dialogue between researchers and artists, which took place at the different research sites. As such, the paper contributes to wider discussions in the field about the role of video data in research in the following ways. Firstly, as scholars increasingly begin to note and attempt to map the fragmented field of visual research (Margolis and Pauwels, 2011; Stirling and Yamada Rice, in press), this paper offers examples of how different conceptualisations of the visual and research can coalesce within a project. Secondly, within discussions about the opportunities the digital increasingly offers researchers, we offer an example of how these digital innovations occur within a shifting context of everyday digital practices. Both of these observations are relevant for how digital visual research is experienced and becomes meaningful in the field. As researchers, a visual artist and a filmmaker, we analyze how the use of film triggered discoveries for us about the relationships between video and ethnographic research.

### **Video making, film and ethnographic research**

Pauwels' (2011) "integrated conceptual framework of the visual" tabulates the diversity of how the visual can sit alongside research, with regards to, for example, research focus, design and dissemination. Our own practice draws across diverse approaches to visual research including work on multimodal transcriptions of video across an array of settings (Bezemer and Mavers, 2011; Cowan, 2014;

Flewitt, 2006; Jewitt, 2009; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001), participatory approaches to the use of film where researchers film people in particular communities to capture their perceptions (Haw, 2010; Pahl and Pool, 2011), analysis of children and young people's film making processes (Burn, 2013; Gibbons, 2010) and video case studies that chart how participants respond to research (Lehn and Heath, 2007). Hadfield and Haw (2012) discuss different filmmaking modalities or 'video modalities' researchers use to capture different types of knowledge exhibited in a research study. The idea of a video modality is helpful because there is a continuum of approaches to the use of video in research from technical transcription that is granular and detailed and a more comprehensive, perhaps more holistic approach which depicts senses in-play, material features, and social interactions. Hadfield and Haw provide five ways of viewing video-data as a modality: firstly, video as extraction as a bird's eye view of data; secondly, video-data as reflection of a phenomenon; thirdly, video-data as a "projection and provocation"; fourthly, video-data as a co-construction of meaning; and finally, video-data as resource to serve as a voice of participants (Hadfield and Haw, 2012, p. 215). Burn (2013) offers the concept of kineikonic mode in order to interrogate the complex multimodality of moving image media. This includes a consideration of spatial and temporal framings, and how filming and editing employ modes such as framing, angle, camera movement, sound and graphics to construct time, space and meaning within film. Burn (2013) employs the term *metamodal* to describe the complexity of modes resting within other modes within this process.

When taking ethnographic footage, there are a series of decisions that video-makers make such as where to film; for how long; and when. All of these decisions rely on the nature of the project and the idiosyncratic nature of the video artists. One of the earliest ethnographic film-makers to illustrate this point is Rouch (Henley, 1998). Rouch made over 100 ethnographic films based on his years in West Africa and he was one of the first ethnographers to use film to document his fieldwork and to editorialize his films (i.e., rather than take raw footage). Rouch employed artistic liberties and what he described as 'ethnographic fictions' (Henley, 1998: 46) when he produced his films. After the use of film in ethnographic research became more mainstream, films and videos needed to meet the same standards as written texts in that ethnographic films had to represent "extended fieldwork" and had to have a familiarity "with the theoretical presuppositions and methodological procedures" and they needed to be "contextualized within the

broader social and economic frames of reference” (Henley, 1998: 50). In other words, ethnographic films had to display a deep and textured understanding of the contexts represented and be framed within concepts and theory undergirding the study. With the CAZ study, researchers did not complete ethnographies, but rather adopted an ethnographic *perspective* (Green & Bloome, 1997) to the research under study by spending time in their research sites and documenting the character and practices enacted in sites.

This diversity of approaches and modalities of video is reflected within the different strands of CAZ. Within CAZ Rotherham, parents and participatory researchers filmed young children move through installations, objects, and artwork video, as part of modalities that were reflective and participatory. Within the Niagara projects, Barsin filmed footage as an artist with a particular aesthetic, making choices for effect and impact, and later editing this footage accompanied by music to draw out affective responses and felt sensibilities. The documentary film serves as a projection, provocation, and as a very particular take, as interpreted by Barsin and the Fourgrounds Team, on the project.

Within the literature on video making and ethnographic / social science research, we identify a number of tensions and contrasting positions, reflecting the fragmented and emergent nature of visual research, that played out in our own encounters with each other’s practices during CAZ. Firstly, there is a distinction made within the literature between science and art, with research sometimes positioned as a scientific endeavour, which stands as a binary to the visual as art. This relates to tensions we navigated within our own collaborations around the extent to which video should play a supporting or additional role to fieldwork, and the extent to which aesthetics and messages carried by the final video product should be foregrounded. Secondly, we consider the experience of research participants in fieldwork that includes video, including how video becomes meaningful to them in the context of everyday digital practices.

## **Science or art?**

MacDougall (2011) traces the history of anthropological filmmaking to early anthropological studies, arguing that filmmaking has influenced and reflected changes in anthropology itself; current anthropological interests in, for example, the “agency of individuals, their subjective experience, social performance, built environments” (p.99) are better suited to film or video than some traditional anthropological concerns such as kinship structures and religious beliefs. MacDougall traces a sense of tension between anthropological filmmaking and traditional anthropology, which is largely linguistic, suggesting that in some ways, “film stands in opposition to the traditional methodologies produced by anthropology” (p.100). This tension is evocative of the distinction Malinowski and Witkiewicz (Roldan & Vermeulen, 2013) made between research as science and filmmaking as art. Indeed MacDougall navigates the dilemma by suggesting that filmmaking can be useful to anthropology, as long as researchers consider “at what point aesthetic choices begin to undermine the creation of new knowledge” (p.102).

In recent years, this binary between research as science and the visual as art has dissolved, with research often described as more akin to art (Willis, 2000) or craft (James, 2013) than science, and arts practice being recognised as research (Nelson, 2012). Despite this, as Pauwels (2011) points out, visual methods is a fragmented field, and there is little integration across disciplines, resulting in a situation where “visual methods, therefore, seem to be reinvented over and over again” (p.3).

As a snapshot of versions of life, photographs and visual methods offer researchers a way to view an assemblage of material qualities coupled with the practices of everyday life (Bourdieu, 1990). Bourdieu used photography to capture French and Algerian habits, practices, and the materialities of the everyday. Drawing on Bourdieu’s interpretative framework, habitus as an unfolding of histories and dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990) and fractures of habitus can be seen in the two forms of video making extrapolated in the article. Embedded into all of the footage, there are bits or fractures of both film maker’s habitus. For Steve, there is a commitment to the authenticity of ethnographic film and raw footage. Capturing parents filming their children moving through structures that he constructed provides a glimpse into Steve’s unfolding background, beliefs, preferences, and desired modal choices. There is a marked sense of following children through structures, openings, and spaces in a lived, embodied way and not in a pre-conceived or



contrived way. There is an emphasis on accurately depicting small children's gestures, sounds, talk, movements, and not on pleasing an audience or speaking to a viewer. For Barsin, on the other hand, there is an unfolding of dispositions or habitus through his use of anchor visuals as metaphors – an xylophone, close-ups of shoes, the backs of heads, and focusing on a knapsack serve as metaphors or figurative devices that speak to viewers with a desired affect in-mind. As well, he used evocative music that he chose to resonate with the message of the narrator. Barsin wanted seamless editing where images flowed into images – the string of which tells the story of CAZ. Less concerned with telling a connected, fluid story, Steve instead wanted to portray the sensorial, tacit way children move and what this movement in spaces tells the viewer about the research. What we have described here briefly are fractal bits of habitus deriving from Steve and Barsin's distinct unfolding predilections and artistic dispositions that became sedimented in the video narrative (Rowsell, 2011).

Indeed, visualizing objects, subject positions, and practices have given researchers over many years a more textured picture of research sites and participants involved in the process, allowing researchers to be more detailed and attentive to environments during data collection in ways that words and fieldnotes fail to capture as vividly. Video ethnographies not only exhibit objects, but also agents – people with faces, types of clothing, demeanours, practices, and reactions. The process of sedimenting fractures of habitus is an agentic process on the part of the video-makers. To varying degrees all visual work (moving image, photography, etc.) bear the traces of the producer of the image because they make the choices in how to visualize. Photographs and video can act as a memory of past experiences (Mehan, 1979). Rose (2008) talks about visuals and photographs as something that we do as a social practice. Pink (2009) examines sensorial features of photographs that display elements of culture, identity practices, and landscapes that would not otherwise be recognized if one exclusively used words as a heuristic to document research.

In parallel to researchers' explorations of the potential of still and moving images to enhance their research, film as an artistic genre was also developing. Burn (2013) traces the emergence of early film as being in dialogue with live theatre. Theatre can be seen as a multimodal sign, framed temporally (acts and scenes) and spatially (the stage). Burn points out that "theatre as a complex of modes

was embedded within cinema from the beginning” (p.1), whether drawing on similar framings of time and space as theatre, or deliberately disrupting the continuities of time and space, through edited changes of shot and location. The potential within film to fragment and edit has led to ongoing debates about whether film should seek to represent naturalistically, or to disrupt and challenge expectations, and the role of ideology within the choices made about this (Burn, 2013; Mulvey, 1975). This understanding of film as an edited, ideologically loaded way of carrying a message or portraying the world was the genealogy of video making that film makers such as Steve and Barsin work within.

This differentiation between video making as a product of field relationships, and film / video as an aesthetic that carries a message, was identified in the assumptions we brought to our own work in CAZ. At the start of the project, we approached video making from differing perspectives. Abi's use (Rotherham) of film in ethnographic research draws on Pink's (2007) position that video is a product of social encounters in the field. Also inspired by Flewitt (2005), Abi was interested in video as a way of better recognizing non-verbal meaning making in the field, which can be particularly important for young children. As a filmmaker, Steve (Rotherham) usually made film with a clear and defined purpose, reshooting interviews or collecting footage specifically to convey a particular meaning. At the start of the CAZ project, Steve's video-making practices were changing; he purchased a digital SLR camera, so was himself part of a wider societal change in video-making practices, driven by increased access to professional quality equipment. As Principal Investigator of the project, Jennifer (Niagara) decided early on to produce a documentary based on the research project because it seemed like the most fitting medium to capture arts-based pedagogy. Certainly the CAZ documentary seemed like a novel way of documenting what happened and a way to represent what Steve calls “fragments”, or, moments, thoughts, and subjectivities. Influenced by the work of Bourdieu (1990) and Rose (2001), Jennifer hoped to visualize the material and the everyday with a nexus of social practice. Working with Barsin (Niagara), Jennifer sought ways of telescoping in on children, adolescents and teenagers engaged in arts practices while at the same time giving a sense of the contexts and social landscapes where these arts practices happen. For Barsin, aesthetics and his training as a filmmaker and editor were the drivers for his practice. As discussed earlier, throughout the process of taking footage, Barsin analyzed angles, framing, objectifying mood by focusing in on objects, and generally

depicting the ethos of each separate project. Tacit practices like framing, lighting, adding sound and music were intrinsically ruled practices as opposed to extrinsic aims or goals imposed on Barsin. From Jennifer's point of view, the documentary was tertiary initially to the Niagara study, with fieldnotes and participatory methods in the field taking a more central role. However, as the project progressed, student participants across all of the Niagara projects liked to be seen and filmed and gradually there was a privileging of the documentary and the process of being filmed by 'the Fourgrounds guys' became central to what CAZ Niagara represented.

Across the four perspectives, the motivations for engaging with video at the start of the project differed; for Abi video supported the research, but the research encounter itself took priority. For Jennifer, a documentary would provide an extra record of the project, although it later became a more central aspect. For Steve, for video to become a film, it has to be about the audience and serve a purpose. For Barsin, the documentary reels had to be edgy, engaging, and ultimately compelling enough to draw the viewer in.

As researchers approached the film making process they were not necessarily aware of the histories, codes and genealogies within which the artists worked. Film genres including such work as community film making, ethnographic film-making, promotional videos and documentaries are all drawn on, depending on the experience of both the filmmaker and the researcher. For instance, Jennifer was acquainted with film professionals and their heuristics (Rowse, 2013) and the CAZ project was built on this work with professionals, however, the whole idea of the camera as the third person in the room imposing its own agenda and logic was not accounted for when designing research methods at the beginning of the project. However, Jennifer's (2013) professional research resurrected when she gave a presentation in Edinburgh. During the presentation, she showcased the documentary and it struck her then that the documentary functions more like a promo or marketing piece than a textured, ethnographic picture of the project. Therefore, tensions between fieldwork and aesthetics, science and art (MacDougall, 2011), were reflected in our own navigations of the role of video making in CAZ.

## **Video making in an everyday digital context**

White (2009) stresses the relationship between the visual in research and people's everyday life contexts. Everyday contexts have an impact on what visual data is produced and what it means. Mills and colleagues (2014) describe video making research in which children who filmed their worlds became attuned to senses in four important ways: embodiment, sensoriality, co-presence with others, and movement (Mills *et al.*, 2014, p.173). In addition, during the study, children became more aware of the nuances and emotive power of film. The researchers gave film-making workshops and had sensory walk-throughs to start to absorb environments and do what artists and directors like Steve and Barsin do, which is to view the world through senses, locomotion, embodiment and visuals.

Pauwels (2011) refers to long-established debates that video can never be naturalistic, as when the video equipment is visible it will have an effect. However, as Coffey and colleagues (2006) point out “ethnographic and qualitative research is now situated within a world increasingly saturated by multimedia technologies” (in White, 2009, p.15). In White's study (2009) she found that the video camera was a familiar and well-used piece of equipment in her research context. Similarly in CAZ, participants were familiar with still photography and video making as part of their everyday practices, and this had implications for the experience of being filmed as part of the research (in diverse ways, as we will go on to discuss). Therefore, rather than referring to binary categories of video as naturalistic or performative, we find it more helpful to think about the role of video in the production of social relationships in the field and in the generation of both linguistic and visual ways of knowing.

Across the CAZ projects, there have been various film encounters to capture how arts practices shift learning spaces and how they can be coupled with a sense of community. In this article we question how video encounters capture fragments of both ways of knowing and of the essence of meaning making within the particularities of the communities in which we research. In the next section, we offer a series of vignettes of video from the UK and Canadian sites, with accompanying discussions that pick up on some

of the themes of video as everyday and as special, as science and as art, and the ways in which positionality, embodiment and visual epistemologies open up or construct these shared possibilities.

***Vignette: So many cameras!***

***Abi and Steve in Rotherham***

*One of the early events we organised was in a small community venue in a former 18<sup>th</sup> century lodge. The local council has recently secured external funding to refurbish the lodge and were keen to demonstrate its usefulness to a range of community groups, so we worked with the council to organise a family fun event around the book 'King Jack and the Dragon'. In this book, a boy called Jack builds a den, which he imagines is his castle. Families with pre school children were invited to attend for an afternoon including song sessions, storytelling, making cardboard crowns and swords, and our den building activity. The den building activity was visually exciting because it was large scale, with huge sheets of cardboard being strapped together to make a substantial structure, which the children could assist with the design of, and then play inside and outside it. Parents had brought their children to the event, but largely stood outside the cardboard castle, which was constructed with children's proportions. Instead, they took photos and video of their children inside the den using their mobile phones. These varied from posed shots, in which they asked the children to stand next to each other in a doorway, looking through a window or peeping over the turrets, through to action shots. In addition, the council staff were taking photos of the castle for their own publicity. Abi and Steve had brought two hand held cameras to take footage for the research. While parents were happy for us to video their children, our invitations for them to take hold of the cameras themselves and collect some footage for us, were less enthusiastically met. Parents wanted to video on their own devices, to share with family, print out, or upload onto social media. These activities were more significant and took priority over our research.*

In this vignette, adults eagerly videoed children for a number of different reasons; research, arts practice, promoting the event, and particularly within the context of everyday practices and intimate family relationships. While the role of photography in celebrating and

making special shared family experiences was first discussed by Bourdieu (Riviere, 2005), it is acknowledged that with the advent of accessible digital technologies, and particularly camera phones, the potential for photography as an everyday, spontaneous activity is increased and changed (Kindberg *et al.*, 2005; Lehmuskallio and Sarvas, 2008; Riviere, 2005). As Bond (2010) points out, this is the case for children as much as for adults. Lehmuskallio and Sarvas (2008) argue that 'snapshot' video taken on mobile phones should be seen as a continuation of still photography on mobile phones (rather than as public imitating professional filmmakers, for example). Riviere (2005) builds on the argument that photography and video on mobile phones is of a different quality, with a different social meaning compared to photography and video on dedicated photographic equipment. Riviere argues that "the mobile phone creates the conditions for a new photographic practice" (p.169) due to its everyday or "commonplace" nature. Significantly for our above discussion, Riviere suggests that such everyday photography, disassociated from the camera itself (a unique, rarified object with a dedicated purpose) foregrounds the affective meaning of photographs, and the spontaneous nature of how they are created. Compared to the affective and in-the-moment sensations created by mobile phone photography and video, the aesthetic properties of the photograph, or its potential to record an 'authentic' record for future memories, are marginalised.

"When it becomes part of the daily experience of using a mobile phone, photography departs from the realm of the occasional or even the exceptional, that gave it its traditional function" (Riviere, 2005, p.171)

The activities of family members in the vignette above typifies the kinds of 'in-the-moment' spontaneous and affective mobile phone photography described by Riviere (2005). The important point here is that our own activities with hand held video cameras, as researcher and artist, existed in this wider context of everyday and commonplace mobile phone photography. We chose small hand held video cameras because we wanted to be able to record the action in an unobtrusive and mobile way. These handheld cameras look very much like mobile phones in shape and size; the filming during the event discussed in the above vignette was interrupted for some minutes by two small babies taking hold of the two hand held cameras we were using, in order to press them to their ears and repeat "hello, hello". To the babies, these hand held cameras *were* phones. We are left wondering, to the adults at this event, was

filming on hand held cameras as part of research and arts practice considered to be more like traditional video making, or more closely aligned with the “new photographic practices” outlined by Riviere (2005, p.169)? Whilst scholars have remarked on the extent to which the ease of access and portability of digital recording equipment has changed the potentials for visual research (Flewitt, 2006) and visual artists have responded to the opportunities of mobile phone photography (for example <http://mobilephotonetwork.com/>), we also need to consider, as researchers and artists, how video making processes are meaningful to people in this new context in which photography and video is separated from the camera (through the ubiquity of camera phones) and photography and video is in-the-moment, everyday and affective.

### ***Vignette: Camera sees and empowers***

#### ***Jennifer in Niagara***

*There is a day in the filming that I recall so vividly. It was in Kathy's grade five classroom when the collaborator of the movement project asked students to plan out and orchestrate five tableaux of the digestive system to music. I remember the resistance that we had from many of the boys in the class. My colleague and I were worried that the boys wouldn't take the activity seriously, or, that they would be reduced to uncontrollable laughter, or, that they would be bored. None of these scenarios happened, and fortunately it was on the Fourgrounds Media day. I remember two students in particular who were 'seen' by being filmed. One student, Natalie (pseudonym), had been diagnosed as a selective mute. She had engaged in almost no verbal communication all year. Kathy allowed her time and space to work slowly into activities. To our surprise, with a little coaxing, she joined the movement activities—in group and pair work—although at first, she did not add to the verbal negotiating. However, over the next few weeks, when asked questions during the movement sessions by one of us, she began to answer very quietly, in short phrases. This change progressed into her group work, so that by the end of the sessions she was adding longer phrases and short, but complete sentences to her group's planning conversations, and despite a high level of noise from groups talking simultaneously in 'preparation mode', she was speaking clearly and loudly enough for her small group to hear her.*

The above vignette contrasts with the previous vignette in that the introduction of the camera into the arts activities was sudden and carried with it pomp and circumstance. Barsin and his colleague set up their equipment, took close-ups and landscape shots of children, they moved around the room and children involved in the research interacted with them. In other words, unlike Abi and Steve's approaches to video making which were largely naturalized and part of everyday experiences, the Fourgrounds film crew were special and foreign to the year 5 group. Partly this lay in the embodiment and materiality of the video making processes; Fourgrounds arrived with large filming equipment which, when standing behind, set them aside from the main action. In Rotherham, Abi and Steve videoed on hand held devices which looked like mobile phones, while inside the den and playing with the children.

At the same time, there were students who *did not* want to be filmed and they said so to both Jennifer and Colleague (Niagara Movement Project Collaborator). As Steve says, with video-making, there is "always some manipulation to give a particular perspective and there are always people on the edges." It is precisely 'the people on the edge' that Jennifer failed to capture and document in the video. But, the catch is, often times the participants on the edges did not want to be seen, so a partial view is probably all Barsin could get; unless the research team abandoned the documentary and focused solely on observations, interviews, and casual conversations. Throughout all of the Niagara projects, there were people who wanted to be seen mixed in with people who did not want to be seen. In fact, one of the tricky parts of filming the CAZ documentary was identifying the seen and unseen participants. Researchers actually put coloured stickers on children and teens who wanted to be featured in the documentary and those who did not. According to research ethics for the project, researchers had to verify that those who did not consent to be videoed were not videoed, so quite a bit of the filming process involved vetting who wanted to be seen and not seen.

Over the course of data collection in Niagara, Jennifer realized that the documentary making was less about documenting and more about artifice and artifact. This is no fault on the part of the Fourgrounds group, it has more to do with a misconception on Jennifer's part about the filmic gaze and what it would do for the research. There was an assumption for Jennifer that media professionals



interview participants, take footage, and leave, with editing done to finesse content. Instead, what actually happened is that Barsin and his colleague arrived, some participants enlivened, got excited about the research and actually talked about being *seen* on the documentary. There was clearly a performative element to the footage taken. That is, researchers and participants wanted to look good on film (Van Leeuwen, 2015) and participants acted a certain way when the cameras were on from when they were off. As professionals, Barsin and his colleagues viewed their film work as impressions of the project and they tried as much as possible to make CAZ appealing to watch as opposed to a mix of successes and struggles.

***Vignette: Being filmed by your mum***

***Abi and Steve in Rotherham***

*Later in the project, we organised a similar den building activity at a local Children's Centre. One of the mothers, Teresa, from the research advisory group collected video data during this event, which she attended with her six year old daughter. One video she made was of her daughter playing and crawling through the cardboard castle. Multimodal transcription shows how the interaction between mother and her daughter shape the video which is made. The action in the transcription is dominated by Anna making eye contact with the camera / her mum and then turning and moving away. At points during the videoing, Teresa is following her daughter, or seeming to 'search' for her in the den, using her camera. Later in the video, Teresa does not follow her daughter so readily, and Anna works to capture her attention, popping up into shot from underneath the camera and holding eye contact. The most striking and repeated interaction between Anna and Teresa in this video is Anna making extended eye contact with the camera, followed by swinging around and running off, with her back to the camera. This 'flirtatious' relationship between child subject and parent film maker is a distinctive feature of this video. It shows Anna's awareness of being filmed, her seeming desire for her mother to follow her as she explore the castle, and also a sophisticated awareness of when she is and is not on shot, and of the power of her own direct gaze at the camera.*

Lomax and Casey (in Penn-Edwards, 2012) warn about making assumptions either that the video camera has a distorting effect, or that it has little or no influence on data collected. Rather, they argue, researchers should “address the way in which the process of data collection helps socially construct and produce the data that is collected” (Lomax and Casey, in Penn-Edwards, 2012, p. 50). This social construction and production of data took place in a particular relational context when Teresa filmed her daughter. In one sense, this video is not naturalistic, in that Anna is aware of and reacting to the camera. There is a sense of ‘being seen’ for Anna which echoes the experiences of the students in the Fourgrounds documentary. In another sense, the video is completely naturalistic, in that Teresa would film Anna like this often, on her mobile phone, for her personal use.

## **Conclusion**

Our encounters between researchers, artists and communities in this research has enabled us to explore implications for video making processes within ethnographic research. This includes the fragmented and diverse nature of the fields of visual ethnographic research and visual arts practice, and the different genealogies and assumptions these fields draw on. In addition, we have noted how the meaning of the visual is shifting, for participants, researchers and artists, in the context of changing digital everyday practices. We argue this has implications for how digital visual research is experienced and made meaningful in the field, including from the point of view of children and young people. These contrasting encounters with the visual in research were particularly apparent in our project because of the multi-sited, collaborative nature of the research. In retrospect, what helps our thinking about the CAZ research is the notion of visual reflexivity: reflecting on and picking apart fractures of habitus within video data and how these fractures draw lines to larger issues. Unpacking what is seen and not seen when watching reels reveals what has been missed or glossed over, how a person or group is positioned (by themselves and by film makers), ways in which beliefs, values, maybe even convictions seep into footage, and, in what ways spaces impact how people move and act.

In our analysis of a series of vignettes from our research, we have noted the playing out of a number of different genealogies and meanings of the digital and the visual in the field. Whilst family photography has historically been used to celebrate and record family experiences (Bourdieu, 1990), the way in which this occurs has recently changed with the widespread use of mobile phone cameras, as evidenced at our Rotherham site. Riviere (2005) has argued that the practices of taking still and moving photography on mobile phones should be seen as a qualitatively different practice to film making and traditional camera photography, leaving us wondering how our small handheld video cameras, which looked more like mobile phones, were made meaningful by parents and children in our study.

In Niagara, the video making equipment was larger and more clearly distinct from the everyday digital equipment participants were familiar with, a distinction which resonates more with historical film and video making in ethnographic research. Within an anthropological genealogy, ethnographers have debated the extent to which video capture aspects of life which would otherwise be missed (Bourdieu, 1990, Pink, 2009), and to what extent aesthetic choices may undermine research (MacDougall, 2011). At the Niagara site, the film making certainly did begin to affect the research, and occupy a more central role than Jennifer had originally envisaged. However, this was due to both the excitement and interest the video making garnered and the reticence of some participants to be filmed in this way.

As a team of researchers and artists, we brought surprisingly diverse, implicit assumptions about video making to our collaborative work. The above vignettes have acted as a heuristic for us to think collaboratively about some of the tensions and distinctions within the possibilities for video making within ethnographic research with artists. When reflecting on what artists' video making added to the research as a whole, and how it differed from video making practices of researchers or participants, it seems that collaboration with artists opened up the diversity of how video can be meaningful as a carrier of messages or producer of ways of knowing. We drew on wider, more contextualised framings of the nature and potential of video making than Abi and Jennifer had in previous visual research. Our encounters with each other made visible assumptions about the visual which may otherwise have remained implicit.

In the end, we acknowledge that video making within CAZ cannot be bracketed as either research, arts practice or everyday practice. Rather, the video making that unfolded within CAZ was a result of the coming together of the framings of the researchers, artists and participants in the field. Genealogies of ethnographic research, visual arts practice and everyday family practices came into dialogue with newer ways of enacting research, art and family life made available by recent digital technologies.

It is within the relationships formed through doing research together that new approaches and insights are surfaced and new potential pathways to knowing can emerge. The research terrain our project traversed was complicated and each individual partnership carefully navigated routes through very different sets of expectations and rationales. At the centre of much of our most successful research was an acceptance of difference and a willingness to take time to listen to each other carefully and consider what working together could look like. It was essential not to project our desires and specific framings onto the desires or framings of others, but to recognise that there are many valid ways of knowing and working collaboratively.

## References

Alibali, M., and M. Nathan. (2007), "Teachers' gestures as a means of scaffolding students, understanding: evidence from an early algebra lesson" in Goldman, R., Pea, R., Barron, B., and Derry, S. (Eds.) *Video Research in the Learning Sciences*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ, pp. 349-366.

Bourdieu, P. (1990), *The Logic of Practice*, R. Nice (trans.), Polity Press, Cambridge.

Bezemer, J. and Mavers, D. (2011), "Multimodal transcription as academic practice: a social semiotic perspective", *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 191-206.

Bond, E. (2010), "Managing mobile relationships: Children's perceptions of the impact of the mobile phone on relationships in their everyday lives", *Childhood*, Vol. 17 No. 4, pp. 514-529.

Burn, A. (2013), "The kineikonic mode: Towards a multimodal approach to moving image media. *NCRM working paper*.

Coffey, A., E. Renold, B. Dicks, B. Soyinka, and B. Mason. (2006), "Hypermedia ethnography in educational settings: possibilities and challenges", *Ethnography and Education*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 15-30.

Cowan, K. (2014), "Multimodal transcription of video: examining interactions in Early Years classrooms", *Classroom Discourse*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 6-21.

Flewitt, R. (2005), "Is every child's voice heard? Researching the different ways 3-year-old children communicate and make meaning at home and in a pre-school playgroup", *Early Years*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 207–222.

Flewitt, R. (2006), "Using video to investigate preschool classroom interaction: education research assumptions and methodological practices", *Visual Communication*, Vol. 5 No. 25, pp. 25-50.

Gibbons, D. (2010), "Tracing the paths of moving artifacts in youth media production", *English Teaching: Practice and Critique* Vol. 9 No. 1, pp8-21.

Green J. and Bloome D. (1997) "Ethnography and ethnographers of and in education: a situated perspective." In: Flood J, Heath SB

and Lapp D (eds) *A Handbook for Literacy Educators: Research on Teaching the Communicative and Visual Arts*. New York: Macmillan, 1–12.

Hadfield, M. and Haw, K. (2012), "Video: modalities and methodologies", *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, Vol. 35 No. 3, pp. 311-324.

Haw, K.F. (2010), "Risk and resilience: the ordinary and extraordinary everyday lives of young people living in a high crime area", *Youth and Society*, Vol. 41, No. 4, pp. 451–474.

Henley, P. (1998). "Film-making and Ethnographic Research." In J. Prosser's *Image-based Research: A Sourcebook for Qualitative Researchers*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.  
pp. 42-59.

James, A. (2013), "Seeking the analytic imagination: reflections on the process of interpreting qualitative data", *Qualitative Research*, Vol. 13 No. 5, pp. 562-577.

Jewitt, C. (Ed.) (2009), *The Routledge Handbook of Multimodal Analysis*, Routledge, London.

Kress, G. and van Leeuwen, T. (2001), *Multimodal Discourse: The Modes and Media of Contemporary Communication*, Hodder Arnold, London.

Kindberg, K. Spasojevic, M. Fleck, R. and Sellen, A. (2005), "The ubiquitous camera: an in-depth study of camera phone use", *Pervasive Computing*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 42-50.

Kullman, K. (2012), "Experiments with moving children and digital cameras", *Children's Geographies*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 1-16.

Lehmuskallio, A. and Sarvas, R. (2008), "Snapshot video: everyday photographers taking short video-clips", *Proceedings NordiCHI 2008: Using Bridges*, pp. 257-265.

Lehn, D., and C. Heath. (2007), "Social interaction in museums and galleries: a note on video-based field notes" in Goldman, R., Pea, R., Barron, B., and Derry, S. (Eds.) *Video Research in the Learning Sciences*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mahwah, NJ, pp. 287-304.

MacDougall, D. (2011), "Anthropological filmmaking: An empirical art" in Margolis, E. and Pauwels, L. (Eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Visual Research Methods*, Sage, London, pp. 99-113.

Mehan, H. (1979), *Learning Lessons: Social Organization for the Classroom*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Mills, K. Unsworth, L. Bellochi, A. Yong Park, J. and Ritchie, S. (2014), "Children's emotions and multimodal appraisal of places: Walking with the camera", *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, Vol. 37, No. 3, pp. 171-181.

Mulvey, L. (1975), "Visual Pleasure and the Narrative Cinema", *Screen*, Vol. 16, No. 3, pp.6-18.

Nelson, R. (2012), *Practice as Research in the Arts*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan

Pahl, K. and Pool, S. (2011), "Living your life because it's the only life you've got: participatory research as a site for discovery in a creative project in a primary school in Thurnscoe, UK", *Qualitative Research Journal*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 17-37.

Pahl, K. and Rowsell, J. (2006), *Travel Notes from the New Literacy Studies Instances of practice*, Multilingual Matters Ltd, Clevedon.

Pauwels, L. (2011), "An integrated conceptual framework for visual social research" in Margolis, E. and Pauwels, L. (Eds.) *The Sage Handbook of Visual Research Methods*, Sage, London, pp. 2-23.

Penn-Edwards, S. (2012), "Human factors affecting the use of video recording methodology in qualitative research", *International Journal of Multiple Research Approaches*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 150–159.

Pink, S. (2007), "Walking with video", *Visual Studies*, Vol. 22 No. 3, pp. 240-252.

Pink, S. (2009), *Doing Sensory Ethnography*, Sage, London.

Pool, S. (2015), video on "The Uses of Film in CAZ".

Riviere, C. (2005), "Mobile camera phones: a new form of "being together" in daily interpersonal communication" in Ling, R. and Pederson, P. E. (Eds.) *Mobile Communications: R-negotiation of the Social Sphere*, Springer, London, pp. 167-186.

Roldan, A.A. and Vermeulen, H. (2013). *Fieldwork and Footnotes: Studies in the History of European Anthropology*. London: Routledge.



Rose, G. (2001), *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*, Sage, London.

Rose, G. (2008), "Using photographs as illustrations in human geography", *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, Vol. 32, pp.151-160.

Rose, G. (2013), 'On the relation between "visual research methods" and contemporary visual culture', *Sociological Review* online.

Rowse, J. (2013), *Working with Multimodality: Rethinking Literacy in a Digital Age*, Routledge, London.

Rowse, J. and Pahl, K. (2015), "Introduction" in Rowse, J. and Pahl, K. (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies*, Routledge, London, pp. 1-16.

Schneider, A. and Wright, C. (2013), *Anthropology and Art Practice*, Bloomsbury, London.

Stirling, E. and Yamada-Rice, D. (forthcoming) *Visual Methods with Children and Young People*. London: Palgrave.

Van Leeuwen, T. (2015), "Looking good: aesthetics, multimodality and literacy studies" in Rowse, J. and Pahl, K. (Eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Literacy Studies*, Routledge, London, pp. 426-439.

White, M. L. (2009), "Ethnography 2.0: writing with digital video", *Ethnography and Education*, Vol. 4 No. 3, pp. 389-414.

Willis, P. (2000), *The Ethnographic Imagination*, Polity Press, Cambridge.